

Persuasive Speech  
Targeting the audience

Ms. Ridal

Moving from belief to action



# Persuasion

- ◆ A speaker may want to change a person's **commitment** to a position by **strengthening** or **weakening** a person's commitment to an issue.
- ◆ Persuasion can involve changing a person's mind on an issue. This is called **conversion**.
- ◆ A speaker may want to **induce a specific action**, calling on audience members to act or alter a behavior or attitude.

# Motivation and Motive

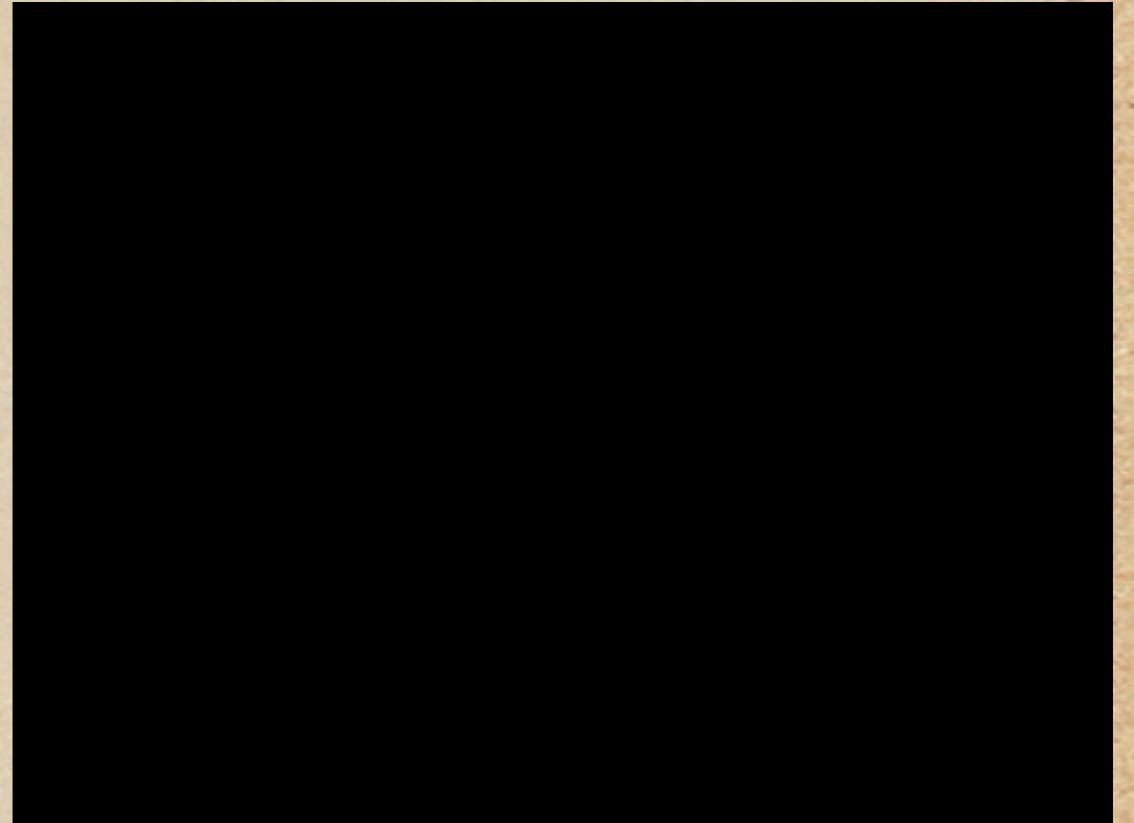
- ◆ You need to access the motivation of your audience.
- ◆ At a most basic level, humans seek to attain pleasure and avoid pain.
- ◆ You must also consider your own motives for delivering the speech: What do you want to accomplish?

# Constraints on Effective Listening

*Selective listening* – We seek out and pay attention to messages with which we already agree.

This may lead to hearing the common ground but ignoring the message.

Knowing the audience's views on an issue changes the way and the order in which you present information: Begin with areas of agreement and move to areas of difference.



# Constraints on Effective Listening

- ◆ **Selective perception**
- ◆ **Denial** – Listeners sometimes refuse to accept a message that challenges them to change, no matter how well that claim is supported or defended.
- ◆ **Dismissal** – Disregarding a message because one disputes that it applies to oneself.
- ◆ **Compartmentalization** – Keeping conflicting beliefs separated so that one need not be conscious of the conflict between them.



# Constraints on Effective Listening

- ◆ **Selective Influence** – messages can be understood in multiple ways
- ◆ **Polysemic** – the message interacts with listeners' different prior experiences, beliefs, and expectations.
- ◆ **Boomerang effect** – the audience does the opposite of what the speaker wants.

"It definitely didn't look like a commercial plane, I didn't see any windows on the side. Again, it was not a normal flight that I've ever seen at an airport. It had a blue logo on the front, and it did not look like it belonged in the area."

-Mark Burnback, a FOX reporter, describing the second Impact live.

# Effective Speaking

- ◆ Strengthening Commitment
  - ◆ Consciousness Raising -- the process of making people aware of values and commitments that they have taken for granted.
  - ◆ Education to Commitment -- informative strategies might provide listeners with background they need to understand an issue, but a persuasive speech goes further, seeking to convince the audience to address the issue



What persuasive techniques  
are being employed here?

# Effective Speaking

## Strengthening Commitment

- ◆ Increasing the sense of urgency -- speakers will argue that
  - ◆ 1) the issue is important
  - ◆ 2) it could be decided either way
  - ◆ 3) it will be decided soon and
  - ◆ 4) the listener's action could tip the scales



What's Mr. Gore trying to accomplish here?

# Effective Speaking

- ◆ Weakening Commitment

- ◆ Finding a critical distinction -- One way to weaken commitment to a principle is to deflect it by invoking a different principle.

Example: a person may believe in the death penalty, but only in cases where guilt is certain.

The speaker may weaken commitment to capital punishment by arguing for mandatory DNA testing for defendants.

# Effective Speaking

- ◆ Weakening Commitment
  - ◆ Refutation -- This idea challenges an audience's commitment directly. It's the attack or defense of a challenged statement or claim.

# Refutation

- ◆ 1. Identify the position to be attacked. State the position as clearly and as fairly as you can.
- ◆ 2. Explain the significance of the position you are attacking.
- ◆ 3. Present and develop the attack. State your position and support it with appropriate materials.
- ◆ 4. Explain the impact of the refutation. Explain what your refutation has accomplished.

# Conversion

- ◆ People do change their minds, abandoning their positions behind and replacing them with others.
- ◆ The aim is to alter a listener's beliefs, either by convincing them to accept something they rejected or reject something they accepted.



# Inducing a Specific Action

- ◆ Involves changing the listeners' attitudes and/or behavior.
- ◆ For example: A person may agree that they shouldn't eat fast food (attitude) but they'll keep ordering it anyway (behavior).
- ◆ For example: A person may stop saying racial slurs (behavior) but still be racist (attitude).